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Transcendental Dependent Arising

A Translation and Exposition of the Upanisa Sutta

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Preface

Tucked away in the Saṃyutta Nikāya among the "connected sayings on causality" (*Nidānasaṃyutta*) is a short formalised text entitled the *Upanisa Sutta,* the "Discourse on Supporting Conditions." Though at first glance hardly conspicuous among the many interesting suttas in this collection, this little discourse turns out upon repeated examination to be of tremendous doctrinal importance. Its great significance derives from the striking juxtaposition it makes of two applications of "dependent arising" (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the principle of conditionality which lies at the heart of the Buddha's doctrine. The first application is the usual one, setting forth the causal sequence responsible for the origination of saṃsāric suffering. Apart from a slight change it is identical with the twelve-factored formulation recurring throughout the Pali Canon. The change—the substitution of "suffering" for "ageing-and-death" as the last member of the series—becomes the lead for the second application of dependent arising. This application, occurring only sporadically in the Pali Canon, shows the same principle of conditionality to

structure the path leading to deliverance from suffering. It begins with faith, emerging out of the suffering with which the first series ended, and continues through to the retrospective knowledge of liberation, which confirms the destruction of the binding defilements. By linking the two series into a single sequence, the sutta reveals the entire course of man's faring in the world as well as his treading of the path to its transcendence. It shows, moreover, that these two dimensions of human experience, the mundane and the transcendental, the dimensions of world involvement and world disengagement, are both governed by a single structural principle, that of dependent arising. Recognising this broader range of the principle, the *Nettipakaraṇa,* a Pali exegetical treatise, has called the second application "transcendental dependent arising" (*lokuttara-paṭiccasamuppāda*).

Despite the great importance of the *Upanisa Sutta,* traditional commentators have hardly given the text the special attention it would seem to deserve. Perhaps the reason for this is that, its line of approach being peculiar to itself and a few related texts scattered through the Canon, it has been overshadowed by the many other suttas giving the more usual presentation of doctrine. But whatever the explanation be, the need has remained for a fuller

exploration of the sutta's meaning and implications. We have sought to remedy this deficiency with the following work offering an English translation of the *Upanisa Sutta* and an exposition of its message. The exposition sets out to explore the second, "transcendental" application of dependent arising, drawing freely from other parts of the Canon and the commentaries to fill out the meaning. Since full accounts of the "mundane" or saṃsāric side of dependent arising can be readily found elsewhere, we thought it best to limit our exposition to the principle's less familiar application. A similar project has been undertaken by Bhikshu Sangharakshita in his book *The Three Jewels* (London, 1967). However, since this work draws largely from Mahayanist sources to explain the stages in the series, the need has remained for a treatment which elucidates the series entirely from the standpoint of the Theravada tradition, within which the sutta is originally found.

—Bhikkhu Bodhi

Note on References

References to the Dīgha Nikāya (DN) and the Majjhima Nikāya (MN) refer to the number of the sutta. References to the Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN) refer to the number of the chapter followed by the number of

the sutta within that chapter. References to the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN) refer to *nipāta* (numerical division) followed by the number of the sutta within that *nipāta.*

Upanisa Sutta

While staying at Sāvatthī the Exalted One said:

"The destruction of the cankers, monks, is for one who knows and sees, I say, not for one who does not know and does not see. Knowing what, seeing what does the destruction of the cankers occur? 'Such is material form, such is the arising of material form, such is the passing away of material form. Such is feeling… perception… mental formations… consciousness; such is the arising of consciousness, such is the passing away of consciousness'—for one who knows and sees this, monks, the destruction of the cankers occurs.

"The knowledge of destruction with respect to destruction has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for the knowledge of destruction? 'Emancipation' should be the reply.

"Emancipation, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting

condition for emancipation? 'Dispassion' should be the reply.

"Dispassion, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for dispassion? 'Disenchantment' should be the reply.

"Disenchantment, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for disenchantment? 'The knowledge and vision of things as they really are' should be the reply.

"The knowledge and vision of things as they really are, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for the knowledge and vision of things as they really are? 'Concentration' should be the reply.

"Concentration, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for concentration? 'Happiness' should be the reply.

"Happiness, monks, also has a supporting

condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for happiness? 'Tranquillity' should be the reply.

"Tranquillity, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for tranquillity? 'Rapture' should be the reply.

"Rapture, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for rapture? 'Joy' should be the reply.

"Joy, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for joy? 'Faith' should be the reply.

"Faith, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for faith? 'Suffering' should be the reply.

"Suffering, monks, also has a supporting condition; I say, it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for suffering? 'Birth' should be the reply.

“And what is the supporting condition for birth? ’Existence’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for existence? ’Clinging’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for clinging? ’Craving’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for craving? ’Feeling’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for feeling? ’Contact’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for contact? ’The sixfold sense base’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for the sixfold sense base? ’Mentality-materiality’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for mentality-materiality? ’Consciousness’ should be the reply.

“What is the supporting condition for consciousness? ’Kamma formations’ should be the reply.

“Kamma formations, monks, also have a supporting condition; I say, they do not lack a supporting condition. And what is the

supporting condition for kamma formations? 'Ignorance' should be the reply.

"Thus, monks, ignorance is the supporting condition for kamma formations, kamma formations are the supporting condition for consciousness, consciousness is the supporting condition for mentality-materiality, mentality-materiality is the supporting condition for the sixfold sense base, the sixfold sense base is the supporting condition for contact, contact is the supporting condition for feeling, feeling is the supporting condition for craving, craving is the supporting condition for clinging, clinging is the supporting condition for existence, existence is the supporting condition for birth, birth is the supporting condition for suffering, suffering is the supporting condition for faith, faith is the supporting condition for joy, joy is the supporting condition for rapture, rapture is the supporting condition for tranquillity, tranquillity is the supporting condition for happiness, happiness is the supporting condition for concentration, concentration is the supporting condition for the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for

disenchantment, disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion, dispassion is the supporting condition for emancipation, and emancipation is the supporting condition for the knowledge of the destruction (of the cankers).

"Just as, monks, when rain descends heavily upon some mountaintop, the water flows down along with the slope, and fills the clefts, gullies, and creeks; these being filled, fill up the pools; these being filled, fill up the ponds; these being filled, fill up the streams; these being filled, fill up the rivers; and the rivers being filled, fill up the great ocean—in the same way, monks, ignorance is the supporting condition for kamma formations, kamma formations are the supporting condition for consciousness, consciousness is the supporting condition for mentality-materiality, mentality-materiality is the supporting condition for the sixfold sense base, the sixfold sense base is the supporting condition for contact, contact is the supporting condition for feeling, feeling is the supporting condition for craving, craving is the supporting condition for clinging, clinging is the supporting condition for existence, existence is the supporting condition for birth, birth is the

supporting condition for suffering, suffering is the supporting condition for faith, faith is the supporting condition for joy, joy is the supporting condition for rapture, rapture is the supporting condition for tranquillity, tranquillity is the supporting condition for happiness, happiness is the supporting condition for concentration, concentration is the supporting condition for the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for disenchantment, disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion, dispassion is the supporting condition for emancipation, and emancipation is the supporting condition for the knowledge of the destruction (of the cankers)."

Transcendental Dependent Arising

An Exposition of the Upanisa Sutta

Dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is the central principle of the Buddha's teaching, constituting both the objective content of its liberating insight and the germinative source for its vast network of doctrines and disciplines. As the frame behind the four noble truths, the key to the perspective of the middle way, and the conduit to the realisation of selflessness, it is the unifying theme running through the teaching's multifarious expressions, binding them together as diversified formulations of a single coherent vision. The earliest suttas equate dependent arising with the unique discovery of the Buddha's enlightenment, so profound and difficult to grasp that he at first hesitated to announce it to the world. A simple exposition of the principle sparks off the liberating wisdom in the minds of his foremost disciples, while skill in explaining its workings is made a qualification

of an adroit expounder of the Dhamma. So crucial is this principle to the body of the Buddha's doctrine that an insight into dependent arising is held to be sufficient to yield an understanding of the entire teaching. In the words of the Buddha: "He who sees dependent arising sees the Dhamma; he who sees the Dhamma sees dependent arising." [1]

The Pali texts present dependent arising in a double form. It appears both as an abstract statement of universal law and as the particular application of that law to the specific problem which is the doctrine's focal concern, namely, the problem of suffering. In its abstract form the principle of dependent arising is equivalent to the law of the conditioned genesis of phenomena. It expresses the invariable concomitance between the arising and ceasing of any given phenomenon and the functional efficacy of its originative conditions. Its phrasing, as terse as any formulation of modern logic, recurs in the ancient texts thus: "This being, that exists; through the arising of this, that arises. This not being, that does not exist; through the ceasing of this, that ceases." [2]

When applied to the problem of suffering, the abstract principle becomes encapsulated in a twelve-term formula disclosing the causal nexus responsible for the origination of suffering. It begins with ignorance, the primary root of the series though not a first cause,

conditioning the arising of ethically determinate volitions, which in turn condition the arising of consciousness, and so on through the salient occasions of sentient becoming down to their conclusion in old age and death:

> "With ignorance as condition, the kamma formations; with kamma formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality; with mentality-materiality as condition, the sixfold sense base; with the sixfold sense base as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering."
>
> —SN XII, *passim*

The corollary of this formula, which constantly accompanies it, describes the conditioned cessation of suffering. It shows how, when ignorance ceases, all the following conditions successively cease, down to the cessation of the "entire mass of suffering."

Though the principle of dependent arising is applicable to any situation where an origination of

phenomena takes place, the Pali Buddhist tradition has focused upon the doctrine almost exclusively in terms of its twelvefold formulation. So much has this been the case that the two have tended to be blankly identified with each other, dependent arising being equated simply with the twelvefold series and the twelvefold series being regarded as an exhaustive treatment of dependent arising. This exclusiveness of emphasis doubtlessly poses a certain danger of rigidity; but even despite this danger it is not without its justification. For the aim of the Buddha's teaching is not abstract and theoretical, but concrete and soteriological. Its goal is liberation from suffering, understood in its deepest sense as the unsatisfactoriness of sentient existence indefinitely repeated in the wheel of becoming, the cycle of births and deaths, called *saṃsāra.* The twelve-term nexus contributes to this liberative thrust by bringing the principle of dependent arising to bear directly on the condition which it is the doctrine's over-riding concern to ameliorate. If suffering is produced by causes, these causes and the way they can be stopped must be uncovered and exposed. The twelvefold application accomplishes precisely this. In its positive or direct aspect (*anuloma*) it makes known the causal chain behind suffering, demonstrating how the round of existence arises and turns through the impulsions of

craving, clinging, and karma, working freely behind the shielding screen of ignorance. In its negative or reverse side (*paṭiloma*) it reveals the way to the cessation of suffering, showing that when ignorance is eliminated by the rise of true knowledge all the factors dependent on ignorance likewise draw to a close.

However, as a consequence of this constriction of attention, sight has tended to be lost of the broader range of exemplifications the principle of dependent arising might have, even within the limits of the soteriological direction of the teaching. Dependent arising cannot be reduced to any single one of its applications. Any application is only a pedagogical device framed from the standpoint of the teaching's practical orientation. Above and beyond its specific instances, dependent arising remains an expression of the invariable structural relatedness of phenomena. It is a principle to which all phenomena conform by the very nature of their being, the principle that whatever comes into existence does so in dependence on conditions. From the perspective this teaching affords, things are seen to arise, not from some intrinsic nature of their own, from necessity, chance or accident, but from their causal correlations with other things to which they are connected as part of the fixed order obtaining between phenomena. Each transient entity, emerging into the present out of the stream of events

bearing down from the past, absorbs into itself the causal influx of the past, to which it must be responsive. During its phase of presence it exercises its own distinctive function with the support of its conditions, expressing thereby its own immediacy of being. And then, with the completion of its actuality, it is swept away by the universal impermanence to become itself a condition determinant of the future.

When this law of inter-connected becoming, of conditionality and relatedness, is extracted from its usual exemplifications and explored for further doctrinal bearings, it can be found to have other ramifications equally relevant to the realisation of the teaching's fundamental aim. One particular exemplification of dependent arising, found with minor variations in a number of suttas, shows the basic principle to serve as the scaffolding for the course of spiritual development issuing in final emancipation. [3] It figures in these suttas as the architectonic underlying the gradual training, governing the process by which one phase of practice conditions the arising of the following phase all the way from the commencement of the path to the realisation of the ultimate goal. To be sure, the application of dependent arising to the achievement of deliverance is already covered from one angle by the reverse or cessation side of the twelvefold formula,

according to which the cessation of ignorance sets off a series of cessations culminating in the cessation of suffering. Thence in itself such an application is not a unique feature of these suttas. What gives these suttas their distinctive quality and value is the positive form in which they cast the sequential pattern of the liberative venture. Whereas the series of cessations presents the achievement of liberation logically, in strict doctrinal terms as the consequence following upon the annulment of saṃsāric bondage, the present sequence views the same chain of events dynamically, from the inner perspective of living experience.

As living experience, the advance to emancipation cannot be tied down to a series of mere negations, for such a mode of treatment omits precisely what is most essential to the spiritual quest—the immediacy of inner striving, growth, and transformation. Parallel to the demolition of old barriers there occurs, in the quest for deliverance, a widening of vistas characterised by an evolving sense of maturation, enrichment, and fulfilment; the departure from bondage, anxiety, and suffering at the same time means the move towards freedom and peace. This expansion and enrichment is made possible by the structure of the gradual training, which is not so much a succession of discrete steps one following the other, as a locking together of overlapping components in a union at once

augmentative, consummative, and projective. Each pair of stages intertwines in a mutually vitalizing bond wherein the lower, antecedent member nurtures its successor by serving as its generative base, and the higher, consequent member completes its predecessor by absorbing its energies and directing them on to the next phase in the series. Each link thus performs a double function: while rewarding the efforts expended in the accomplishment of the antecedent stage, it provides the incentive for the commencement of the consequent stage. In this way the graduated training unfolds organically in a fluid progression in which, as the Buddha says, "stage flows over into stage, stage fulfils stage, for crossing over from the hither shore to the beyond." [4]

All the factors comprised in this sequence come into being in strict subjection to the law of conditioned genesis. The accidental, the compulsory, and the mysterious are equally excluded by the lawful regularity governing the series. The stages of the path do not emerge fortuitously or through the operation of some inscrutable power, but originate conditionally, appearing spontaneously in the course of training when their requisite conditions are complete. Thus the course of spiritual development these suttas reveal is a dependent arising—a coming into being in dependence on conditions. But this dependent arising

differs significantly from its mundane counterpart. The mundane version, with its twelve links, describes the movement of saṃsāra, which revolves in a perpetually self-regenerating circle leading from beginning to end only to find the end lead back to the beginning. The mechanism of this process, by which defilements and renewed existence mutually kindle one another, is fuelled by the hope that somehow some solution will yet emerge within the framework of laws set for the turning of the wheel, a hope repeatedly disappointed. The present version of dependent arising delineates a type of development that only becomes possible when this hope has been dispensed with. It hinges on the prior recognition that any attempt to eliminate suffering through the gratification of craving is doomed to failure, and that the only way to stop it is to cut through the vicious nexus at its base. Though the movement it describes is still cyclic, it is not the circular revolution of saṃsāra it is concerned with but a different kind of rotation that only comes into play when the essentially defective nature of the ordinary human condition has been clearly perceived and the urge towards liberation from it made the dominant motive of the inner life. The present sequence depicts the movement towards release. It sets forth a drive which, in contrast to the pointless repetition of saṃsāra, evolves up and

outwards in an unbroken spiral ascent—a pattern in which each turn supports and strengthens its successor's capacity for liberation, enabling the series as a whole to pick up the momentum needed to break the gravitational pull of the mundane sphere. Since all the phases in this progression arise in dependence on their antecedents, the series represents a dependent arising. But unlike the familiar version of dependent arising, the present version leads, not back to the round of becoming, but to the overcoming of saṃsāra and all its attendant sufferings. Hence the *Nettippakaraṇa* calls this sequence "transcendental dependent arising" (*lokuttara paṭiccasamuppāda*)—a dependent arising that leads to the transcendence of the world. [5]

The sutta we will investigate here for an account of "transcendental dependent arising, is the *Upanisa Sutta* of the *Nidānasaṃyutta* (SN XII.23). In addition to giving a clear, explicit account of the conditional structure of the liberative progression, this sutta has the further advantage of bringing the supramundane form of dependent arising into immediate connection with its familiar saṃsāric counterpart. By making this connection it brings into prominence the comprehensive character of the principle of conditionality—its ability to support and explain both the process of compulsive involvement which is the

origin of suffering and the process of disengagement which leads to deliverance from suffering. Thereby it reveals dependent arising to be the key to the unity and coherence of the Buddha's teaching. When the Buddha declares, "I teach only suffering and the cessation of suffering," [6] the bond which unites these two terminals of the doctrine as complementary sides of a single, internally consistent system is simply the law of dependent arising.

The *Upanisa Sutta* gives three expositions of "transcendental dependent arising." The first expounds the sequence in reverse order, beginning with the last link in the series, the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers (*āsavakkhaye ñāṇa*), and tracing the chain backwards to the first link in the liberative sequence, namely, faith. At this point it crosses over to the mundane order, explaining faith as arising through suffering, suffering as conditioned by birth, birth as conditioned by existence, and so on back through the familiar links to ignorance as the first member of the chain. After completing the reverse exposition, the Buddha then expounds the same series in forward order, beginning with ignorance and following through to the knowledge of destruction. This he does twice, in exactly the same way, once before and once after the striking simile comparing the sequential origination of the factors to the gradual

descent of rainfall from a mountain, through the graded ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers to the great ocean at the mountain's base. Thus the series of conditions presented in the sutta can be mapped out in the abstract as follows:

Mundane Order

Ignorance (*avijjā*)
Kamma formations (*saṅkhārā*)
Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
Mentality-materiality (*nāmarūpa*)
Sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*)
Contact (*phassa*)
Feeling (*vedanā*)
Craving (*taṇhā*)
Clinging (*upādāna*)
Existence (*bhava*)
Birth (*jāti*)
Suffering (*dukkha*)

Transcendental Order

Faith (*saddhā*)
Joy (*pāmojja*)
Rapture (*pīti*)
Tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
Happiness (*sukha*)
Concentration (*samādhi*)
Knowledge and vision of things as they are

(*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*)
Disenchantment (*nibbidā*)
Dispassion (*virāga*)
Emancipation (*vimutti*)
Knowledge of destruction of the cankers
(*āsavakkhaye ñāṇa*)

For ease of explanation we will examine the links of transcendental dependent arising in direct order. However, before doing so, it is instructive to note that there is special significance in the initial presentation of the series in reverse. Such a presentation serves to throw an important spotlight on the nature of the causal relation obtaining between the path to liberation and its goal. It shows that the type of causal development displayed by this progression is quite different from the pattern of blind efficient causality which involves the incidental emergence of an effect out of its causal matrix, as for example when a series of geological changes triggers off an earthquake or a number of atoms combine to form some new molecule. The relationship between the path and the goal belongs to a more complex order of causality, one which can perhaps be pictured as a set of prior causes giving rise to an effect but can never be adequately and correctly comprehended in terms of this model. What we have here is not an instance of simple, one-

directional causality proceeding forward unmodified in a straight line; we have, rather, a species of teleological causality involving purpose, intelligence, and planned striving simultaneously projected towards and refracted from the aimed at effect in a process of reciprocal determination. In the workings of this relationship not only does the path facilitate the achievement of the goal, but the goal as well, already present from the outset as the envisaged aim of striving, itself bends back to participate in the shaping of the path. Starting from man's awareness of the painful inadequacies of his existence, and his intuitive groping towards a condition where these are allayed, the formula proceeds to trace back, in terms derivative from and constantly checked against the goal, the series of alterations he must induce in his cognitive and emotive makeup to bring the goal into his reach.

We see this pattern illustrated in the traditional account of prince Siddhartha's great renunciation. [7] When the future Buddha leaves his palace, he goes forth in the confidence that beyond the perishable, defective, and substanceless things of the world there is accessible to man an unperishable and self-sufficient state which makes possible deliverance from suffering. What he needs to discover, as the objective of his "holy quest," is the path bridging the two domains. This he does by pursuing backwards from the goal of

striving the obstructions to its attainment and the steps to be taken to remove those obstructions. One line of exploration begins with ageing and death as the fundamental manifestation of the suffering which weighs upon the world, and follows its chain of conditions back to ignorance as the underlying root. [8] Another, complementary line starts with the defilements as the principal obstruction to emancipation. It then finds the defilements to be sustained by ignorance, ignorance by the distracted mind, and the distracted mind by a causal nexus going back to lack of faith in the true Dhamma. [9] From this the conclusion follows, as shown in the *Upanisa Sutta,* that to achieve deliverance the defilements must be removed through dispassion, to reach dispassion ignorance must be overcome by correct understanding, to arouse understanding the mind must be concentrated, and so on through the counter-conditions down to the gain of faith in the true Dhamma.

In both cases the reverse direction of the sequential logic reveals the peculiar nature of the path-goal relationship. The two stand together in a bond of reciprocal determination, the path leading to the achievement of the goal and the goal giving form and content to the path. In addition to the forward thrust of the path, there is thus a basic feedback emanating

from the goal, so that the goal can, in a sense, generate out of itself, through the circuit system of man's constitutional capacities, the series of measures needed to bring about its actualization. This relationship is analogous to the relation between a guided missile and its mobile target. The missile does not reach its target merely through its own initial thrust and direction. It finds it precisely because it is being controlled by signals the target is itself emitting.

Faith (Saddha)

"Suffering is the supporting condition for faith": After asserting as the last step in the mundane sequence that birth is the supporting condition for suffering, the sutta switches over to the transcendental series with the pronouncement that suffering is the supporting condition for faith. With respect to both assertions the present formulation diverges from the usual version of twelve-factored dependent arising. In the usual version the forward sequence ends with the statement that birth is the condition for ageing-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. With this it concludes, leaving unstated the implied aftermath—that this "mass of suffering" will generate anew the fundamental ignorance at the head of the whole series, thus beginning another run through the

cycle. The fact that suffering here replaces ageing-and-death as the last member of the saṃsāric part of the series therefore has a special importance. It cautions us to the impending change, signalling that we are about to witness, in the progression of links to follow, not just one more turn of the wheel but an interruption of its forward spin and a struggle to reverse its natural direction of movement.

The Buddha's declaration that suffering is the supporting condition for faith points to the essential backdrop to the awakening of the religious consciousness. It reveals that spiritual awareness and the quest for enlightenment do not arise spontaneously in harmony with our natural modes of world-engagement, but require a turn "against the current," a break away from our instinctual urges for expansion and enjoyment and the embarkation in a different direction. This break is precipitated by the encounter with suffering. Suffering spurs the awakening of the religious consciousness in that it is the experience of suffering which first tears us out of our blind absorption in the immediacy of temporal being and sets us in search of a way to its transcendence. Whether in the form of pain, frustration, or distress, suffering reveals the basic insecurity of the human condition, shattering our naïve optimism and unquestioned trust in the

goodness of the given order of things. It throws before our awareness, in a way we cannot evade, the vast gulf stretching between our ingrained expectations and the possibilities for their fulfilment in a world never fully susceptible to domination by our wills. It makes us call into question our schemes of values built upon the bedrock of personal expedience. It leads to a revaluation of all values and a new scale of worth indifferent to the claims of self-concern. And it opens us to confidence in an unseen order of relations and inter-connections, an order in which the values that emerge, so often in forceful opposition to the old, will find their proper justification and reward.

Yet for suffering to become an effective spur to spiritual awakening it is not enough merely to encounter it. For the religious consciousness to be aroused suffering must be not only met as a constant liability of our existence, but confronted and grappled with in the arena of thematic reflection. As long as we engage suffering simply in its superficial modes, as felt pain and sorrow, we will react to it in one of two ways, both of which operate at a purely psychological level. In the first case we will react to suffering in an unhealthy manner, as when we arouse resentment against the source of our displeasure and seek relief by annihilating it, ignoring it, or running away in pursuit of some easy escape. In the second case we will react

to suffering in a mentally healthy way, as when we fortify our minds with patience and courage, strengthen our capacities for endurance, and seek to resolve the problem in a realistic manner. But though the second approach is definitely to be preferred to the first, in neither case does that inward revolution take place which awakens us to our extreme need for deliverance and compels us to set off in a new direction previously unknown and unexplored. The urge for liberation can only set in when pain and sorrow have been confronted with reflective awareness and recognised as symptoms of a deeper ailment demanding a radical therapy. The quest for a conclusive solution to the problem of suffering begins with an act of understanding, not with mere tribulation. It starts from the realisation that suffering is more than a chance encroachment upon a state of affairs otherwise felicitous, that it is a malady which infects our being upwards from its very root. We must come to see that the breeding ground of suffering lies not so much in the outside world as at the base of our own being, and that any cure that is to be permanently effective must uproot it at this inward source.

The arising of such a realisation depends upon the adoption of a new perspective from which the fact of suffering can be faced in its full range and universality. Though single in its essence, suffering or

dukkha yet divides into three stages or tiers in accordance with the level of understanding from which it is viewed. [10] At the most elementary level suffering appears as physical pain and oppression, manifest most clearly in the events of birth, sickness, ageing and death, as well as in hunger, thirst, privation, and bodily discomfort. At a higher level it comes to be seen as a psychological fact—as the sorrow and frustration springing from our separation from what is desired, our meeting with what is disliked, and the disappointment of our expectations. And at the third and highest level suffering becomes manifest in its essential form, as the inherent unsatisfactoriness of the saṃsāric round in which we turn without purpose on account of our ignorance and attachments. These three tiers are not mutually exclusive. In each case the lower level serves as basis for the higher, by which it is absorbed and comprehended. Thus, though the penetration of the highest stage, the essential suffering comprised in the "five clinging aggregates" (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), represents the climax of understanding, this realisation comes as the fruit of a long period of preparation grounded upon the first flash of insight into the basic inadequacy of the human condition. Such an insight usually dawns through particular experiences typical of the first two stages of suffering

—through sudden pain, loss or disappointment, or through chronic anxiety, confusion, and distress. But in order to become the stimulus to a higher course of development, our vision must be capable of rising from the particular to the universal. It is only when we see clearly for ourselves that we are "sunk in birth, ageing, and death, in sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, sunk in suffering, overcome by suffering" (MN 29), that we are really ready for the means to bring this unsatisfactory condition to an end.

Since it is suffering that impels us to seek the way to liberation, suffering is called the supporting condition for faith. By itself, however, the confrontation with suffering even at the level of mature reflection is not sufficient to generate faith. For faith to arise two conditions are required: the first is the awareness of suffering, which makes us recognise the need for a liberative path; the second is the encounter with a teaching that proclaims a liberative path. Thence the Buddha says that faith has for its nutriment hearing the exposition of the true Dhamma. [11] *Saddha*, the faith that comes into being as a result of hearing the exposition of the true Dhamma, is essentially an attitude of trust and commitment directed to ultimate emancipation. In order for such faith to arise and become a driving force of spiritual development, it must meet with an objective ground capable of

eliciting its forward leap into the unknown and of prompting its inner urge towards liberation. From the Buddhist perspective this objective ground is provided by the three objects of refuge—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, that is, the enlightened Teacher, his teaching, and his community of noble disciples. The faith to be placed in them must not be blind and uncritical. Though initially requiring consent born out of trust, it also must be based on critical scrutiny—the Teacher tested to determine his trustworthiness, his doctrine examined to decide on its cogency, and his disciples interrogated to ascertain their reliability. [12] As a result of such examination, conducted either through personal confrontation whenever possible or through scrutiny of the scriptural records, faith becomes settled in the Buddha as the Perfectly Enlightened One, the unerring guide on the path to deliverance; in the Dhamma as his teaching and the path leading to deliverance; and in the Sangha as the community of the Buddha's disciples who have verified his teaching through their own direct experience, and hence may be relied upon for guidance in our own pursuit of the goal.

As the first requisite of spiritual development, faith is compared to a hand, in that it is needed to take hold of beneficial practices, and to a seed, in that it is the vitalizing germ for the growth of the higher virtues.

Beneath its seeming simplicity it is a complex phenomenon combining intellectual, emotional, and conative elements. Intellectually faith implies a willingness to accept on trust propositions beyond our present capacity for verification, propositions relating to the basic tenets of the doctrine. Through practice this assent will be translated from belief into knowledge, but at the outset there is required an acceptance which cannot be fully corroborated by objective evidence. Emotionally faith issues in feelings of confidence and serene joy, coupled with an attitude of devotion directed to the objects of refuge. And at the level of volition faith reinforces the readiness to implement certain lines of conduct in the conviction they will lead to the desired goal. It is the mobilising force of action, stirring up the energy to actualize the ideal.

Joy (Pamojja)

"Faith is the supporting condition for joy": Faith functions as a support for the next link in the series, joy or gladness (*pamojja*), by permitting an outlet from the pent-up tensions of an existential impasse brought on by the reflective encounter with the problem of suffering. Prior to the discovery of the true Dhamma two alternatives present themselves to the thoughtful

individual as he struggles to work out a viable solution to the problem of suffering once it has emerged into the open in its full depth and universality. One alternative is compliant submission to a justification of suffering developed along traditional theological lines—that is, a theodicy which sees evil and suffering as detracting from the goodness of the created order only superficially, while ultimately contributing to the total perfection of the whole. This solution, though generally aligned with the higher ethical values, still appears to the sensitive thinker to be a facile answer constantly provocative of a gnawing sense of doubt and disbelief. The other alternative is resignation to suffering as a brute fact unintelligible to man's moral sense, an incidental offshoot of a universe totally indifferent to any structure of spiritual or ethical values. This solution, though not internally inconsistent, clashes with our basic moral intuitions so sharply that the result, for the sensitive thinker, is often a turn to nihilism in one of its two forms—as reckless licence or ineffectual despair.

Neither the theological nor the materialistic answers can show the way to an actual escape from suffering. Both, in the last analysis, can only hold out a choice between resignation and rebellion. The gain of faith in the true Dhamma spells the end to this quandary by

pointing to a solution which can admit the pervasive reality of suffering without needing to justify it, yet can give this suffering a cogent explanation and indicate an escape. Suffering, from this perspective, is traceable to distinct causes endowed with ethical significance; it is the inevitable result of our own immoral actions returning to ourselves. Our actions, when viewed from the standpoint of the Dhamma, are neither threads in some invisible handiwork of divine perfection, nor meaningless pulsations of nerves and brain, but expressions of ethically significant decisions having an integral place in a morally intelligible world. They are seen as choices for which we bear full responsibility before an impersonal universal law that ensures the preservation of an equilibrium between deeds and their results, so that virtuous deeds bring forth happiness and evil deeds suffering. The round of becoming in which we are immersed—where we are born, grow old, suffer, and die—this round is created by ourselves, fashioned out of our own blindness and craving. We build the round ourselves and we can bring it to an end by ourselves, by eradicating this world-sustaining ignorance and desire. The path to liberation is revealed in all its practical details with full precision and clarity. It is a path of conduct and insight each man must tread for himself, success being dependent entirely on his own diligence, sincerity and

energy, and on his capacities for renunciation and understanding.

The gain of faith in the true Dhamma thus points to an outlet from the contention of opposed alternatives, neither of which can be happily embraced. It exhausts the pressures of an apparent dead-end, and as the stress and tension fall away there springs up a surge of joy conditioned by the acquisition of faith. This incipient swell of joy grows by degrees as the aspirant's contemplation focuses more sharply upon the objects in which confidence has been reposed. Sustained reflection on the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha gradually dispels the darkness of doubt and indecision. It issues in an effusion of light, of peace and inner clarity, when as a result of such reflection the defilements are attenuated and the mind's impulsion towards the elevating qualities the refuges represent gains in forward momentum. For this reason faith is compared to a miraculous water-clearing gem. According to Indian legend, there is a special gem possessed by the mythic universal monarch which, when thrown into a stream of turbid water, immediately causes it to become clear. The strands of vegetation float away, the mud settles, and the water becomes pure, serene, and sweet-tasting, fit to be drunk by the monarch. Similarly, it is said, when the gem of faith is set up in the heart it causes the

hindrances to disappear, the defilements to settle, and the mind to become clear, lucid, and serene. [13]

The strengthening of confidence in the objects of refuge becomes the incentive for a firmer dedication to the practice of the teaching. Thence the texts ascribe to faith the characteristic of "leaping forward." [14] Faith leaps forward in that "when the yogin sees that the hearts of others have been set free, he leaps forward, by way of aspiration, to the various fruits of a holy life, and he makes efforts to attain the yet unattained, to find the unfound, to realise the unrealized." [15] This aspect of faith is illustrated by a courageous hero who lunges across a turbulent river to escape from danger, saving himself thereby and inspiring others by his example.

At this stage, in particular, the aspirant's faith creates a readiness to undertake the basic rules of moral training. Through his settled faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha he is prepared to enter the path of practice, which requires at the start that he train in the foundation of the path, the observance of moral discipline (*sīla*). For this reason the acceptance of moral restraint is said to be undertaken out of faith. [16] Moral restraint is taken up by accepting rules of discipline designed to inculcate an inner disposition of virtue by controlling bodily and verbal actions. The codes of rules vary in scope from the five basic

precepts of the Buddhist layman to the more than 227 training rules undertaken by the bhikkhu or fully ordained monk, but all share the common characteristic of disciplining behaviour. Each of the basic precepts involves an explicit principle of abstinence requiring to be observed and an implicit mental attitude to be cultivated through such abstinence. The former consists in abstention from the unwholesome actions of taking life, stealing, sexual abuse, false speech and partaking of intoxicants; the latter calls for a persistent effort to develop a mind of compassion, honesty, purity, truthfulness, and sobriety. The immediate result of living in conformity with these guidelines to right action is the arising of a sense of freedom from remorse (*avippatisara*). Remorse, a feeling of regret over moral transgression and neglect, tends to provoke guilt, agitation, and self-recrimination. When, through close adherence to the precepts, the mind is freed from remorse, an ease of conscience and "bliss of blamelessness" set in born of the knowledge that one's actions are beyond reproach. Thence the Buddha declares wholesome rules of conduct to have freedom from remorse as their benefit and reward. [17] The joy that comes through realising one's purity confirms the confidence originally placed in the teaching. Thereby it arouses still stronger faith and a desire for further application to the practice.

Rapture (Pīti)

"Joy is the supporting condition for rapture": Though for certain individuals serene faith in the objects of refuge and a clear conscience are sufficient to transform joy into rapture, such cases are the exception rather than the rule. Generally, in order for the emotional tone of the spiritual life to be lifted to that pitch of intensity suggested by the term "rapture" (*piti*) a further commitment to the training is necessary. This commitment takes the form of deliberate application to the practice of meditation. Methods of meditation contributing to the attainment of liberation are classified into two systems—serenity meditation (*samathabhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassanābhāvanā*). Serenity meditation aims at the creation of a state of calm concentration by unifying the mind in focus on a single object. Insight meditation aims at insight into the nature of phenomena by directly contemplating the bodily and mental processes as they occur on the successive moments of experience. Though there is a system which employs mindfulness as a direct means to the awakening of insight, in the usual pattern serenity is cultivated first as a preliminary measure, since the unification and purification of consciousness effected by concentration facilitate correct penetration of the nature of things through contemplative insight. This is the sequence

utilised by the present sutta, the stages from "rapture" through "concentration" covering the systematic development of serenity; the two following stages, the development of insight.

Serenity meditation is cultivated on the basis of a single object selected from a standard set of objects reserved exclusively for the development of concentration. These objects, traditionally numbered at forty, include the coloured and elemental circles called *kasiṇas,* the cemetery contemplations, the recollections of the three refuge objects, meditation on the sublime abodes of love and compassion, mindfulness of breathing, etc. After taking up one of these objects as his field of work, the yogin strives to unify his mind by fixing his attention on his object to the exclusion of all sense data, concepts, thoughts, memories, projections, fantasies, and associative thinking. His aim is to make his mind one-pointed, and this forbids at once its dispersal among a multiplicity of concerns. Success in the practice depends on the harmonisation of the mental faculties in the work of concentration. Through mindfulness (*sati*) the yogin bears the object in his field of awareness and prevents it from slipping away; through discernment (*sampajañña*) he maintains a cautious watch upon the mind, noting its tendencies to stray and swiftly correcting them; and through energy

(*viriya*) he strives to dispel the impediments to mental unification, and to maintain his awareness at a pitch which is simultaneously taut but relaxed.

The impediments to meditation are classified into a group of five factors called the "five hindrances" (*pañcanivaraṇa*). These are sensual desire, ill will, stiffness and torpor, restlessness and regret, and doubt. The Buddha calls these five hindrances "corruptions of the mind" and "weakeners of wisdom." He says they are conducive to pain, blindness, and ignorance, and compares them respectively to a debt, a disease, imprisonment, slavery, and the dangers of a desert journey. Their removal by unremitting exertion is the first task facing the meditator. As he proceeds in his practice, striving with patience and diligence, there come suddenly momentary breaks in the course of his efforts when the hindrances fall away, the flow of inner verbalization stops, and the mind abides one-pointedly on the object. The achievement of this momentary concentration, brief as it is, gives immense satisfaction. It is a powerful experience unleashing spurts of mental energy which flood up to the surface of consciousness and inundate the mind with waves of joyous refreshment. It brings an elating thrill bordering on ecstasy, crowning the yogin's previous endeavours and inspiring further effort.

This experience marks the arising of rapture. The distinguishing feature of rapture is a strong interest and delight directed to the object of attention. Its function is to give refreshment to the body and mind. It can assume both wholesome and unwholesome forms, depending on whether it is motivated by attachment or detachment with respect to its object, but on occasions of meditative consciousness it is always wholesome. The commentaries distinguish five degrees of rapture which make their appearance in the successive stages of mental unification. [18] "Minor rapture," the lowest on the scale, is said to be able to raise the hairs of the body. "Momentary rapture," the next degree of development, rushes through the body with an intensity likened to streaks of lightning flashing forth in the sky at different moments. "Showering rapture," the third degree, breaks over the body again and again with considerable force, like the waves on the seashore breaking upon the beach. "Uplifting rapture" is so-called because it is credited with the ability to cause the body to levitate, and the *Visuddhimagga* cites several cases where this literally occurs. And "pervāding rapture," the highest on the scale, is said to completely fill the whole body as a huge inundation fills a rock cavern. Since the commentary to our sutta defines joy (*pamojja*), the prior link in our sequence, as weak rapture, we may

assume this to signify the delightful interest preceding the deliberate development of meditation, that is, in the stages when faith in the Dhamma was just acquired and the purification of moral discipline commenced. The five degrees of rapture presented here would then pertain exclusively to the rapture found in meditative consciousness. And since the last degree of rapture only gains ascendancy with the attainment of full absorption, which does not come until later, it seems that the degrees of rapture which are distinctive of the present stage of progress are the four beginning with minor rapture and reaching their peak with uplifting rapture.

Tranquillity (Passaddhi)

"Rapture is the supporting condition for tranquillity": While the appearance of rapture indicates a definite advance in the work of concentration, its coarser modes still contain an element of exuberance which is in constant danger of slipping out of control and spilling over into unwholesome states of mind dominated by restlessness and agitation. For rapture involves an intense delight in the object coupled with an anticipation of even greater delight to come. The experience of present delight can often be accompanied by an underlying worry that this

pleasure will disappear, while the expectation of further delight can stimulate a subtle grasping at the future. Both states, the anxiety and the grasping, bring along an excitation inimical to the centering of the mind in one-pointed calm. For this reason, as the yogin progresses in his practice, a point is reached where the ecstatic exultation sparked off by rapture becomes felt as an obstruction to the development of mental unification, a corruption of the training which must be pacified and stilled.

Rapture itself will remain as a factor of meditative development up to the third absorption, but to permit further progress its detrimental tendencies have to be sublimated. Through continued application to the practice rapture becomes more refined, shedding the heated zest of its initial forms. With its refinement it increasingly evokes along with itself another quality called "tranquillity" (*passaddhi*). Tranquillity is characterised by the quieting down of mental disturbances. It removes agitation and restlessness, imparting to the mind a soothing calm comparable to the cool shade offered by a tree to travellers oppressed by the sun's heat. Tranquillity operates in two co-occurrent forms, "tranquillity of body" and "tranquillity of mind," where "mind" signifies the aggregate of consciousness and "body," not the physical organism, but the group of consciousness-

adjuncts included in the aggregates of feeling, perception, and mental formations. [19] Thence the arising of tranquillity results in the subsiding of disturbances throughout the full extent of the psychodynamic system. It allays the propensity towards excitement, soothes the innervations brought on by rapture, and casts over the meditative endeavour a profound stillness paving the way for deeper states of concentration to follow.

Tranquillity further induces in both consciousness and its adjuncts the qualitative factors of lightness, malleability, wieldiness, proficiency, and rectitude. These factors, present to some extent in every wholesome state of consciousness, perform the respective tasks of eliminating sluggishness, rigidity, unwieldiness, disability, and insincerity. By holding at bay these mental corruptions destructive to moral and spiritual progress, they enhance the functional efficiency of the mind, rendering it a more tractable instrument for application to the higher stages of the path.

Happiness (Sukha)

"Tranquillity is the supporting condition for happiness": As the yogin's psychosomatic system is brought to a state of tranquil composure, a feeling of

inner happiness or bliss (*sukha*), unobtrusively present from the start, gains in prominence until it emerges in its own right as a salient feature of the training. Though closely associated with rapture, happiness is not identical with the latter and can arise in its absence. Rapture denotes a mental factor belonging to the fourth of the five aggregates into which Buddhism classifies the psycho-physical organism, namely, the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhārakkhandha*). It is a conative rather than affective phenomenon, which fuses zestful interest with a sense of joyous delight. Happiness, on the other hand, is a purely hedonic factor belonging to the second aggregate, the aggregate of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*). It is pleasurable feeling, here, as the happiness conditioned by tranquillity, the pleasure which springs up in meditation as disturbances subside.

Rapture is relatively coarse in quality and happiness subtle. Thence, though rapture is always accompanied by happiness, in the higher meditative attainment of the third jhāna happiness can remain even after rapture has faded away. The *Atthasalini*, a commentary to the Abhidhamma-piṭaka, illustrates the difference between them with a vivid simile:

> A man who, travelling along the path through a great desert and overcome by the heat is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the

way, would ask, “Where is water?” The other would say, “Beyond the wood is a dense forest with a natural lake. Go there, and you will get some.” He hearing these words would be glad and delighted. Going onwards, be would see men with wet clothes and hair, hear the sound of wild fowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels by the edge of the natural lake, he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily, etc., growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water, he would be all the more glad and delighted, would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibres and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandalaka, ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and in the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently lay himself down and say: “O bliss! O bliss!” Thus should this illustration be applied:The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest till he saw the water is like *piti* having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath

and drink be laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, "O bliss! O bliss!" etc., is the sense of *sukha* grown strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object.

—Maung Tin, trans. *The Expositor* (Atthasalini), (London 1920), Vol. I, pp 157–58.

Despite the simile's suggestion, rapture and happiness are not necessarily asynchronous, and are in fact only sundered with the attainment of the third jhāna. The presentation of happiness as arising subsequent to rapture only means that happiness becomes the salient feature of the path after rapture has already made its own distinctive contribution and settled back to a subsidiary place. In the present stage rapture still persists, only its exuberance has now been toned down by the prevailing quiescence developed in the stage of tranquillity.

The subcommentary to the *Upanisa Sutta* explains *sukha* as the happiness of the access to absorption. The term "access" (*upacāra*) denotes the stage in the cultivation of serenity immediately preceding full absorption, the intended goal of serenity meditation. Access is characterised by the abandonment of the five hindrances and the arising of the "counterpart sign," the self-luminous object of interior perception which is

the focal point for the higher stages of concentration. The abandoning of the hindrances began already with the gain of faith, which conferred a serene lucency suspending their turbulence, and each ascending rung along the path marked their attenuation to a further degree. Since the hindrances are the principal obstructions to both serenity and insight, the early stages of the path are primarily concerned with their debilitation and elimination.

The elimination of the hindrances prior to attaining access is brought about by means of two methods, one specifically directed to each hindrance separately, the other applicable to all at once. The former is to be employed when a particular hindrance obtrudes itself with persistent force, the latter on other occasions when no one hindrance seems especially conspicuous. The specific method involves the reversing of the causal situation out of which the hindrance develops. Since each defiling factor is a conditioned phenomenon coming into existence through distinct causes, the key to its elimination lies in applying the appropriate antidote to its causal base. Thus sensual desire arises on account of unskilful attention to the attractive features of things, to alluring objects and physical bodies. It is attenuated by considering the impermanence of the objects of attachment, and by reflecting on the repulsive nature underlying the

attractive appearance of the bodies which arouse desire. Ill will or anger also springs up from unskilful attention, in this case to the unpleasant aspects of persons and things; it is reversed by developing loving kindness towards disagreeable people and patience in the face of unfavourable circumstances. Stiffness and torpor become prominent by submitting to moods of sloth and drowsiness; they are dispelled by the arousal of energy. Restlessness and regret arise from attending to disturbing thoughts and are eliminated by directing the mind to an object conducive to inner peace. And doubt, grounded upon unclarity with regard to fundamental points of doctrine, is dispelled by clear thinking and precise analysis of the issues shrouded in obscurity.

In contrast to these techniques, which counter the hindrances separately, the practice of concentration on one of the prescribed objects of serenity meditation inhibits them all simultaneously. Though only effective so long as no particular hindrance impedes the meditative progress, this method, drawing upon the power of mental unification, is capable of bringing tremendous force to bear upon the struggle against their supremacy. Since the latent defilements can crop up into the open only so long as the mind is driven by discursive thinking, the unification of the mind upon a single object closes off the portal through which they

emerge. As the mind descends to increasingly deeper levels of concentration, the hindrances are gradually made to subside until, with the attainment of access, their suppression becomes complete. Held at bay in the base of the mental continuum, the latent defilements are no longer capable of rising to the surface of consciousness. For as long as the suppressive force of concentration prevails, their activity is suspended, and the mind remains secure in its one-pointed stabilisation, safe from their disruptive influence. This abandonment of the hindrances through the power of suppression brings a feeling of profound relief accompanied by a blissful effusion born from the newly accomplished purification. The Buddha compares the happiness of abandoning the hindrances to the happiness a man would experience if he were unexpectedly freed from debt, cured of a serious illness, released from prison, set free from slavery, or led to safety at the end of a desert journey. **[20]**

Concentration (Samādhi)

"Happiness is the supporting condition for concentration": The attainment of access signals a major breakthrough which spurs on further exertion. As a result of such exertion the bliss generated in the

access stage is made to expand and to suffuse the mind so completely that the subtlest barriers to inner unification disappear. Along with their disappearance the mind passes beyond the stage of access and enters into absorption or full concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration itself denotes a mental factor present in both the attainments of access and absorption. Its salient feature is the wholesome unification of the mind on a single object, and it brings about a harmonisation between consciousness and its concomitants to a degree sufficient to free them from the distraction, vacillation, and unsteadiness characterising their normal operations. The mind in concentration, fixed firmly on its object, is like the flame of a candle shielded from the wind or the surface of a lake on which all the waves and ripples have been stilled.

However, although both access and absorption partake of the nature of concentration, an important difference still separates them, justifying the restriction of the term "full concentration" to absorption alone. This difference consists in the relative strength in the two attainments of certain mental concomitants called the "factors of absorption" or "jhāna factors" (*jhānaṅgāni*)—namely, applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and mental one-pointedness. These factors, aroused at the

very beginning of serenity meditation and gradually cultivated through the course of its progress, have the dual function of inhibiting the hindrances and unifying the mind on its object. According to the commentaries, the factors are aligned with the hindrances in a direct one-to-one relation of opposition, such that each jhāna factor has the specific task of countering and occluding one hindrance. Thus applied thought counteracts stiffness and torpor, sustained thought doubt, rapture ill will, happiness restlessness and regret, and one-pointedness sensual desire. [21] At the same time the factors exercise a consolidating function with respect to the object, applied thought directing the mind to the object, sustained thought anchoring it there, rapture creating an interest in it, happiness experiencing its affective quality, and one-pointedness focusing the mind on the object.

In the access attainment the jhāna factors are strong enough to keep the hindrances suppressed, but not yet strong enough to place the mind in absorption. They still stand in need of maturation. Maturation comes as a result of continued practice, which gives them the power to lift the mind beyond the threshold plane of access and plunge it into the object with the unshakeable force of full absorption. In the state of absorption the mind fixes upon its object with such a

high intensity of concentration that subjective discriminations between the two no longer occur. The waves of discursive thinking have at last subsided, and the mind abides without straying even the least from its base of stabilisation. Nevertheless, even full concentration admits of degrees. At the plane of absorption concentration is divided into four levels called the four jhānas. These are distinguished by the aggregation of factors present in each attainment, the order of the four being determined by the successive elimination of the comparatively coarser factors. In the first jhāna all five jhāna factors are present; in the second applied and sustained thought are eliminated, in the third rapture is made to fade away; and in the fourth the feeling of happiness is replaced by equanimity, the peaceful feeling-tone which veers neither toward pleasure nor toward pain. One-pointedness remains present in all four jhānas, the one constant in the series. To rise from the first jhāna to the second, the yogin, after emerging from the first jhāna, must reflect upon the coarseness of applied and sustained thought and the first jhāna's inadequacy due to the proximity of the hindrances. Then he must consider the second jhāna as more peaceful and sublime, arouse the aspiration to attain it, and exert his energy to achieve a stronger degree of mental unification. Similarly, to rise from the second to the

third jhāna he must repeat the same procedure taking rapture as the coarse factor needing to be eliminated, and to rise from the third to the fourth jhāna he must reflect on the coarseness of happiness and the superiority of neutral, equanimous feeling.

Beyond the fourth jhāna lie four even subtler stages of concentration called the four formless attainments (*arūpasamāpatti*). In these attainments the luminous counterpart sign serving as the object of the jhānas is replaced by four successively more refined formless objects, which give their names to their respective attainments—the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. At the peak of this scale of meditative equipoise consciousness arrives at a point of unification so fine that, like the geometric point, it eludes detection, and its presence can be neither affirmed nor denied.

Knowledge and Vision (Ñāṇadassana)

"Concentration is the supporting condition for the knowledge and vision of things as they really are": Despite the loftiness and sublimity of these exalted attainments, immersion in deep concentration is not the end of the Buddhist path. The unification of consciousness effected by serenity meditation is only a

means to a further stage of practice. This stage, ushered in by the next link in the series, "the knowledge and vision of things as they really are" (*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*), is the development of insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*).

Through his deep concentration the yogin is able to suppress the defilements, to bring them to a state of quiescence where they no longer invade the active processes of thought. But beneath the surface stillness the defilements lie latent, ready to spring up again if provoked. As long as the defilements remain present, even if only in dormant form, release from suffering has yet to be achieved, for the latencies of the defilements lying quietly in the mental continuum can still regenerate the saṃsāric round of continued birth and death. The latent tendencies are the seeds of renewed existence, which bring about a re-arising of the stream of consciousness and thence of all the remaining links in the saṃsāric chain. To end the round and attain deliverance the defilements must be completely destroyed; it is not enough merely to suppress them. The destruction of the defilements cannot be brought about by concentration alone, for concentration, even at its deepest levels, can only effect the suspension of their activity, not their eradication. To destroy the defilements down to their bottommost stratum of latency something more is

needed—*paññā,* the wisdom which penetrates the true mark of phenomena. Concentration gains its place in the Buddhist discipline in so far as it induces the mental one-pointedness of at least the access level required as the support for wisdom. Thus the Buddha enjoins his disciples to develop concentration, not as an end in itself, but because "one who is concentrated understands things as they really are." [22] Only a mind which has been rendered pure and calm can comprehend things in accordance with actuality, and the discipline of concentration, by suppressing the hindrances, engenders the required purity and calm. The actual work, however, of extricating the defilements is performed exclusively by wisdom.

Wisdom is "the one thing needed" to cut off the defilements because the most fundamental of all the mental depravities is ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance is the kingpost upon which all the other defilements converge and the lynchpin which holds them all in place. While it remains the others remain, and for the others to be destroyed it must be destroyed. Doctrinally defined as nescience with regard to the four noble truths, ignorance signifies not so much the lack of specific pieces of information as a basic non-comprehension regarding the true nature of things as expressed in the four truths. Since the eradication of the defilements depends upon the eradication of

ignorance, the one factor capable of abolishing the defilements is the factor capable of abolishing their fundamental root, and that is the direct antithesis of ignorance—wisdom or "the knowledge and vision of things as they really are." For this reason, at the beginning of our sutta, the Buddha proclaims: "The destruction of the cankers is for one who knows and sees, I say, not for one who does not know and does not see." The defilements, epitomised in the "cankers," are only destroyed for one who overcomes ignorance by the wisdom which knows and sees things as they are.

The compound expression "knowledge and vision," indicates that the kind of knowledge to be developed is not mere conceptual understanding, but knowledge which in its directness and immediacy is akin to visual perception. Conceptual understanding is often needed to clear away the intellectual obstructions to a correct perspective, *but it must eventually yield to the light of direct experience.* To achieve this experiential understanding it is necessary to enter upon the practice of the second system of Buddhist meditation, the development of insight. The practice of insight meditation aims at dislodging the defilements by eradicating the ignorance at their base. Ignorance is overcome by generating, through mindful observation, a direct insight into things as they really

are. The material upon which insight works is precisely the sphere where ignorance is concealed, our own psycho-physical experience. Its method is the application of mindfulness or discerning awareness to this sphere without interruption and in all activities.

In the discourse the Buddha states that what must be known and seen as they are is the five aggregates—their nature, their arising, and their passing away. The five aggregates—material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—are the basic categories structuring the Buddha's analysis of experience. Each experiential occasion, from the Buddhist perspective, is a complex process involving a number of factors functioning in unison. To normal, non-analytical consciousness this unified complex appears as a uniform mass, a false appearance which, when accepted at face value, leads to the assumption of a simple solid self as the permanent subject of cognition. The assumption of permanent selfhood Buddhism holds to be the basic conceptual error dominating our mental horizon. It is the outermost shell of egoistic projection shielding the pre-conceptual ignorance, and thus the first of the ten fetters to be broken along the path to liberation.

To dispel the illusion of independent selfhood the experiential process must be submitted to searching scrutiny which rectifies the false perceptions

contributing to its formation. The first phase in this examination is the dissection of the cognitive fabric into the distinct threads entering into its make-up. These "threads" or components are the five aggregates. The aggregate of material form covers the physical side of experience, comprising both external material objects and the body together with its sense faculties. The other four aggregates constitute the mental side of experience. Feeling is the affective quality of pleasure or pain, or the neutral tone of neither pleasure nor pain, present on any occasion of mental activity. Perception is the selective faculty, which singles out the object's distinctive marks as a basis for recognition. The formations aggregate is a comprehensive category incorporating all mental factors other than feeling and perception; its most conspicuous member is volition. And consciousness is the faculty of cognition itself, which sustains and coordinates all the other factors in the task of apprehending the object. These five aggregates function in complete autonomy, entirely through their reciprocal support, without need for a self-subsistent unifying principle to be identified as a self or subject.

In order to develop the knowledge and vision of things as they really are with respect to the aggregates, the yogin must first emerge from his state of deep concentration, for the analytical faculty—silenced in

the folds of serenity—has to be brought into play to effect the required dissection. With his mind made clear and pliant as a result of concentration, the yogin attends to the diverse phenomena coming into range of his awareness. The phenomena are attended to as they become manifest to determine their salient characteristics; then, on this basis, they are assigned to their appropriate place among the aggregates. Whatever is physical belongs to the aggregate of material form; whatever registers affective tone is feeling; whatever notices the object's marks is perception; whatever wills is a mental formation; and whatever cognizes is consciousness. The aggregates may further be grouped into a simpler scheme by placing material form on one side and the four mental aggregates on the other, the two being coupled as mentality-materiality (*nama rūpa*). They are then correlated with their causes and conditions to expose their dependently arisen nature. The analytic procedure generates the realisation that experience is just a double stream of material and mental events without a subsisting self. The synthetic procedure makes it clear that all these events are conditioned phenomena which arise when their conditions are present and cease when their conditions disappear.

This last realisation becomes the portal to the next major stage in the development of understanding, the

contemplation of rise and fall. As the yogin attends to the states that appear, he sees how each undergoes the same process of coming into being, altering, and passing away: "Such is the arising of material form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Such is the passing away of material form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness." The contemplation of rise and fall brings into focus three marks common to all conditioned phenomena—their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. Impermanence is generally the first characteristic to be discerned, as it becomes clear through the immediate attention given to rise and fall. The perception of impermanence leads directly to insight into the other marks, which follow naturally from the first. The notion of "happiness," or "pleasure," at the level of philosophical understanding rather than mere feeling, hinges upon an implicit notion of permanence. If something is to be truly a source of happiness it must be permanent. What is impermanent is incapable of yielding lasting happiness and security, and therefore turns out, under examination, to be really unsatisfactory, a potential source of suffering. The notion of selfhood in turn rests upon the two pillars of permanence and pleasure. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory cannot be identified as a self, for it lacks any solid unchanging core upon which the notion of

selfhood can be grounded. Thus the impermanent, unsatisfactory phenomena comprised in the five aggregates turn out to have a third characteristic, the aspect of selflessness. The realisation of these three characteristics—impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness—through unmediated insight is the knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

Disenchantment (Nibbidā)

"The knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for disenchantment": As the yogin contemplates the rise and fall of the five aggregates, his attention becomes riveted to the final phase of the process, their dissolution and passing away. This insight into the instability of the aggregates at the same time reveals their basic unreliability. Far from being the ground of satisfaction we unreflectively take them to be, conditioned things are seen to be fraught with peril when adhered to with craving and wrong views. The growing realisation of this fundamental insecurity brings a marked transformation in the mind's orientation towards conditioned existence. Whereas previously the mind was drawn to the world by the lure of promised gratification, now, with the exposure of the underlying danger, it draws away in the direction of a

disengagement. This inward turning away from the procession of formations is called *nibbidā*. Though some times translated "disgust" or "aversion," the term suggests, not emotional repugnance, but a conscious act of detachment resulting from a profound noetic discovery. *Nibbidā* signifies in short, the serene, dignified withdrawal from phenomena which supervenes when the illusion of their permanence, pleasure, and selfhood has been shattered by the light of correct knowledge and vision of things as they are. The commentaries explain *nibbidā* as powerful insight (*balavā vipassanā*), an explanation consonant with the word's literal meaning of "finding out." It indicates the sequel to the discoveries unveiled by the contemplative process, the mind's appropriate response to the realisations thrust upon it by the growing experiences of insight. Buddhaghosa compares it to the revulsion a man would feel who, having grabbed hold of a snake in the belief it was a fish, would look at it closely and suddenly realise he was holding a snake. **[23]**

As our rendering implies, disenchantment marks the dissipation of an "enchantment" or fascination with the kaleidoscopic pleasures of conditioned existence, whether in the form of sense enjoyments, emotions, or ideas. This fascination, resting upon the distorted apprehension of things as permanent, pleasurable, and

self, is maintained at a deep unverbalized level by the hope of finding self identity in the conditioned. As the enchanted mind presses forward seeking explicit confirmation of the innate sense of selfhood, everything encountered is evaluated in terms of the notions "mine," "I," and "my self," the principal appropriative and identificatory devices with which the inherent sense of personal selfhood works. These three notions, imputed to phenomena on account of ignorance, are in actuality conceptual fabrications woven by craving, conceit, and speculation, respectively. The insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness cuts the ground out from underneath this threefold fabrication, reversing the mode in which phenomena can be viewed. Whereas before the development of insight the aggregates were regarded as being "mine," "I," and "self," now, when illuminated with the light of insight knowledge, they are seen in the opposite way as "not-mine," "not I," and "not self." Since the fascination with phenomenal existence is sustained by the assumption of underlying selfhood, the dispelling of this illusion through the penetration of the three marks brings about a de-identification with the aggregates and an end to their spell of enchantment. In place of the fascination and attraction a profound experience of estrangement sets in, engendered by the

perception of selflessness in all conditioned being. The suttas present this sequence thus:

> Material form, monks, is impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. What is impermanent, suffering and non-self, that should be seen with correct wisdom as it really is: "This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self." So seeing, the instructed noble disciple becomes disenchanted with material form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with mental formations, and disenchanted with consciousness.
>
> —SN XXII.15–17

Dispassion (Virāga)

"Disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion": In the trail of disenchantment there arises a deep yearning for deliverance from the round of saṃsāric becoming. Previously, prior to the arrival at correct knowledge and vision, the mind moved freely under the control of the impulses of delight and attachment. But now, with the growth of insight and the consequent disenchantment with conditioned

existence, these impulses yield to a strong detachment and evolving capacity for renunciation. Whatever tends to provoke grasping and adherence is immediately abandoned; whatever tends to create new involvement is left behind. The old urges towards outer extension and accumulation give way to a new urge towards relinquishment as the one clearly perceived way to release. Every motion of the will becomes subordinated to the newly ascendant desire for liberation: "Just as a fish in a net, a frog in a snake's jaws, a jungle fowl shut into a cage,…—just as these are desirous of being delivered, of finding an escape from these things, so too this meditator's mind is desirous of being delivered from the whole field of formations and escaping from it." **[24]**

The desire for deliverance leads to a quickening of insight. The capacity for comprehension picks up new speed, depth, and precision. Like a sword the mind of insight-wisdom cuts through the net of illusions fabricated on account of ignorance; like a light it illuminates phenomena exactly as they are. As the power of insight mounts, driven by the longing for liberation, a point is eventually reached where a fundamental turn-about takes place in the seat of consciousness, effecting a radical restructuring of the mental life. The beam-like radiance of insight expands into the full luminosity of enlightenment, and the

mind descends upon the supramundane path leading directly and irreversibly to final deliverance.

This transformation, signified by *virāga* or dispassion, is the first strictly supramundane (*lokuttara*) stage in the progression of transcendental dependent arising. The earlier links in the sequence leading up to dispassion are all technically classified as mundane (*lokiya*). Though loosely called "transcendental" in the sense that they are directed to the unconditioned, they are still mundane in terms of their scope since they operate entirely within range of the conditioned world. Their objects of concern are still the five aggregates, or things derivative upon them. But with the attainment of dispassion consciousness passes clear beyond the mundane level, and for a fleeting moment realises as its object the unconditioned state, *nibbāna.*

The shift in standpoint comes about as the immediate consequence of the preceding stages of development. Through insight into the three marks the basic distortions covering over the true nature of phenomena were exposed; with the uncovering of their true nature there set in a disengagement from phenomena. This disengagement led to an attitude of relinquishment and a fading out of desire. Now, having released its grip on the conditioned, the mind turns to the unconditioned, the deathless element

(*amata dhātu*), focusing upon it as the only state fully adequate to itself:

> Whatever is there of material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—he beholds these phenomena as impermanent, suffering, as a disease, a boil, a dart, a misfortune, an affliction, as alien, as decomposing, as empty, as selfless. He turns his mind away from these phenomena; and when he has turned his mind away from them, he focuses his mind on the deathless element, thinking: "This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of the foundations, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna."
>
> —MN 64

Though the realisation of the unconditioned requires a turning away from the conditioned, it must be emphasised that this realisation is achieved precisely through the understanding of the conditioned. Nibbāna cannot be reached by backing off from a direct confrontation with saṃsāra to lose oneself in a blissful oblivion to the world. The path to liberation is a path of understanding, of comprehension and transcendence, not of escapism or emotional self-

indulgence. Nibbāna can only be attained by turning one's gaze towards saṃsāra, and scrutinising it in all its starkness. This principle—that the understanding of the conditioned is the way to the unconditioned—holds true not only in the general sense that an understanding of suffering is the spur to the quest for enlightenment, but in a deeper, more philosophical sense as well.

The path to nibbāna lies through the understanding of saṃsāra for the reason that the experiential realisation of the unconditioned emerges from a prior penetration of the fundamental nature of the conditioned, without which it is impossible. The states of mind which realise nibbāna are called liberations (*vimokkha*), and these liberations are threefold according to the particular aspect of nibbāna they fix upon—the signless (*animitta*), the wishless (*appaṇihita*), and emptiness (*suññata*). The signless liberation focuses upon nibbāna as devoid of the "signs" determinative of a conditioned formation, the wishless liberation as free from the hankering of desire, and the emptiness liberation as devoid of a self or of any kind of substantial identity. Now these three liberations are each entered by a distinct gateway or door called "the three doors to liberation," (*vimokkhamukha*). [25] These three doors signify precisely the contemplations of the three universal marks of the conditioned—

impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Insight into each mark is a different door leading into the realisation of the unconditioned. The profound contemplation of impermanence is called the door to the signless liberation, since comprehension of impermanence strips away the "sign of formations" exposing the markless reality of the imperishable to the view of the contemplative vision. The contemplation of suffering is called the door to the wishless liberation, since understanding of the suffering inherent in all formations dries up the desire that reaches out for them. And deep contemplation of selflessness is called the door to the emptiness liberation, since it exposes the voidness of substantial identity in all phenomena and hence the unviability of the self-notion in relation to the unconditioned. In each case the understanding of the conditioned and the realisation of the unconditioned are found to lock together in direct connection, so that by penetrating the conditioned to its very bottom and most universal features, the yogin passes through the door leading out of the conditioned to the supreme security of the unconditioned.

The supramundane consciousness that realises nibbāna directly penetrates the four noble truths, illuminating them all at once with startling clarity: "Just, O monks, as a man in the gloom and darkness of

the night, at the sudden flashing up of lightning, should with his eyes recognise the objects; just so the monk sees, according to reality: 'This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.'" [26] The penetration of the truths simultaneously performs four functions, one with respect to each truth. It fully understands (*parijānāti*) the first noble truth, the truth of suffering, since by taking nibbāna as its object it acquires a perspective from which it can directly see that in contrast to the unconditioned every thing impermanent, defiled, and conditioned is marked with suffering. It abandons (*pajahati*) the second noble truth, the truth of the origin, since it eradicates the craving and defilements which originate suffering so that they can never arise again. It realises (*sacchikaroti*) the third noble truth, the truth of cessation, by apprehending nibbāna in which all the suffering of saṃsāra is permanently cut off. And it develops (*bhaveti*) the path, the fourth noble truth, since at the moment of penetration the eight mental factors comprised in the noble eightfold path concurrently arise performing the task of realisation. Right view sees the unconditioned; right thought directs the mind upon it; right speech, right action, and right livelihood eradicate their opposites; right effort invigorates the mind; right mindfulness fixes

attention on the unconditioned, and right concentration unifies the mind in absorption on the unconditioned. The ancients compare the mind's ability to perform this fourfold function to the burning of a lamp. Just as a lamp simultaneously burns the wick, dispels the darkness, creates light, and uses up the oil, so the supramundane knowledge simultaneously understands suffering, abandons craving, realises nibbāna, and develops the path. [27]

The breakthrough to the unconditioned comes in four distinct stages called the four supramundane paths. Each momentary path-experience eradicates a determinate group of defilements ranked in degrees of coarseness and subtlety, so that the first path eliminates the coarsest defilements and the fourth path the most subtle. The defilements cut off by the paths are generally classified as ten "fetters" (*saṃyojana*), receiving this designation because they fetter sentient beings to saṃsāra. With the first path the yogin eradicates the first three fetters—personality view, doubt, and misapprehension of rules and observances. Thereby he becomes a "stream-enterer" (*sotāpanna*), one who has entered the stream of the Dhamma and is bound for final deliverance in a maximum of seven more lives passed in the human or heavenly worlds. The second path weakens all the remaining fetters to the point where they no longer

arise frequently or obsessively, but cuts off none completely; with its attainment the yogin advances to the stage of a "once-returner" (*sakadāgāmi*), one who is due to return to the sense sphere world only one more time. By eliminating sensual desire and aversion by means of the third path, he attains the state of a non-returner (*anāgāmi*), no longer bound to the sense sphere but heading for rebirth in a pure divine abode, where he will reach the final goal. The fourth path cuts off the remaining five fetters—desire for existence in the fine material and immaterial planes, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. With its attainment the yogin becomes an arahat, who has destroyed all the defilements and reached the state of perfect purification.

Emancipation (Vimutti)

"Dispassion is the supporting condition for emancipation": Each of the supramundane path-moments is immediately followed by several moments of a different kind of supramundane experience called "fruition" (*phala*). Fruition marks the enjoyment of the realised degree of release effected by the path's work of eradicating defilements. Whereas the attainment of the path is an extremely intense exhilarating experience requiring the expenditure of a tremendous

quantum of energy, the attainment of fruition is characterised by its peacefulness, relaxedness, and blissful quiescence. If the path-attainment be illustrated by a captive's sudden bursting of the chains that hold him in captivity, fruition may be compared to his savouring the taste of freedom that lies beyond the captive state.

The completion of the fourth path and fruition results in full emancipation (*vimutti*): "With the destruction of the cankers, he directly realises for himself, enters, and abides in that emancipation of mind, emancipation of wisdom, which is cankerless." [28] The subtlest and most tenacious fetters have been broken, and there is nothing now that makes for further bondage. Having destroyed the mental corruptions at their basic level of latency, the yogin has completed his task. There is nothing more to do, and nothing to add to what has been done. He abides in the living experience of deliverance.

The emancipation realised by the arahat has a twofold aspect. One aspect is the emancipation from ignorance and defilements experienced during the course of his lifetime, the other the emancipation from repeated existence attained with his passing away. Through his complete penetration of the four noble truths, the arahat has eradicated ignorance and released his mind from the grip of the passions. The fading away of the

passions issues in a stainless purity called emancipation of mind (*cetovimutti*); the fading away of ignorance issues in a radiant awareness called emancipation of wisdom (*paññāvimutta*). The mind of the arahat is at once impeccably pure through the absence of attachment and radiantly bright through the luminosity of wisdom. Endowed with this emancipation of mind and of wisdom, he can move and act in the world without being soiled by the mire of the world. He chooses, thinks, decides, and wills free from the compulsion of egoistic habits. The grasping of "I" and "mine" has ceased, the inclination to conceit can no more obsess him. Having seen the egoless nature of all phenomena he has cut through the tangle of egoistic constructs and become "a sage who is at peace" (*muni santo*).

Since he has destroyed the defilements, whatever disturbances might assail a person on their account no longer assail him. Even though sublime and striking sense objects come into range of his perception they cannot overwhelm his mind: "His mind remains untouched, steadfast, unshakeable, beholding the impermanency of everything." [29] In the arahat greed, hatred, and delusion, the unwholesome roots which underlie all evil, have been totally abandoned. They are not merely suppressed, but withered up down to the level of their latencies, so that they are no longer

able to spring up again in the future. This destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion is called the nibbāna realisable during life-time; it is nibbāna visible here and now. "In so far as the monk has realised the complete extinction of greed, hatred, and delusion, in so far is nibbāna realisable, immediate, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise." [30] Because in this attainment the five aggregates continue to function, sustained by bodily vitality, it is also called "the nibbāna element with a residue remaining." [31]

But though for the arahat disturbances due to the defilements do not arise, he is still subject to "a measure of disturbance" conditioned by the body with its six sense faculties. [32] Though he cannot be overcome by greed and aversion he still experiences pleasure and pain; though he cannot generate kamma binding to saṃsāra he must still choose and act within the limits set by his circumstances. Such experience, however, is for the arahat purely residual. It is merely the playing out of his stored up kamma from the past, which can still fructify and call forth responses so long as the body acquired through prior craving stands. But because craving has now been inwardly exhausted, there lies ahead for him no renewal of the round of birth and death. All feelings, being experienced with detachment, not being delighted in, will become cool.

They arouse no new craving, provoke no new expectations, lead to no new accumulations of kamma; they merely continue on devoid of fecundity until the end of the life span. With the break-up of the body at his passing away, the arahat makes an end to the beginningless process of becoming. This is the second stage of his emancipation—emancipation from renewed existence, from future birth, ageing, and death: "The sage who is at peace is not born, does not age, does not die, does not tremble, does not yearn. For him there does not exist that on account of which he might be born. Not being born, how can he age? Not ageing, how can he die?" [33] Because, with the emancipation from continued existence, no residue of the aggregates persists, this attainment is called "the nibbāna element without residue remaining." [34]

The Knowledge of Destruction (Khaya-ñāṇa)

"Emancipation is the supporting condition for the knowledge of destruction": Following each of the four paths and fruits there arises a retrospective cognition or "reviewing knowledge" (*paccavekkhana ñāṇa*) which reviews the defilements that have been abandoned by the particular path and the defilements remaining to be eliminated. In the case of the last path and fruition,

the path and fruition of arahatship, the reviewing knowledge ascertains that all defilements have been eradicated and that there are none left to be destroyed. This knowledge certifying the abandonment of the defilements arises immediately after the mind has been liberated from their grip by the full penetration of the four noble truths:

> He understands as it really is: "This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path to the cessation of suffering. These are the cankers, this is the origin of the cankers, this is the cessation of the cankers. This is the path to the cessation of the cankers." As he is knowing and seeing thus, his mind is liberated from the canker of sensuality, from the canker of existence, and from the canker of ignorance. When it is liberated, the knowledge arises in him: "It is liberated."
>
> —MN 39

As the text indicates, this cognizance of the mind's liberation is direct and personal, without dependence on others. Just as a keen sighted man can look into a pool of clear, limpid water and see for himself the shells, pebbles, gravel and shoals of fish. The liberated person can look into himself and see that his mind has

been set free from the cankers. [35]

The retrospective cognition of release involves two acts of ascertainment. The first, called the "knowledge of destruction" (*khaya-ñāṇa*), ascertains that all defilements have been abandoned at the root; the second, the "knowledge of non-arising" (*anuppāde ñāṇa*), ascertains that no defilement can ever arise again. The two together are also called the "knowledge and vision of emancipation" (*vimutti-ñāṇadassana*), the use of the word "vision" again underscoring the perceptual immediacy of the cognition by which the mind verifies its own release from the defilements. By possessing this knowledge, one who has destroyed the defilements not only experiences the freedom that results from their destruction, but acquires as well an inner certitude with respect to their destruction. If a liberated individual only enjoyed liberation from the defilements without also enjoying indubitable knowledge that he is liberated, his attainment would always be haunted by an inner suspicion that perhaps, after all, some area of vulnerability remains. Even though no defilement ever came to manifestation, the shadow of uncertainty would itself mar the attainment's claim to completeness. However, because the attainment of arahatship automatically generates a retrospective cognition ascertaining the final

abandonment of all defilements, there is no room for such a suspicion to arise. Like a deer in a remote forest far from the reach of hunters, the one who has crossed over attachment to the world walks in confidence, stands in confidence, sits down in confidence, and sleeps in confidence. [36] He is out of reach of the defilements, and knows he is out of their reach.

Though the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers is not always set up in the arahat's awareness, it is permanently available to him, and awaits only his advertence to make itself present. Since the cankers have been eradicated, whenever the arahat looks into his mind he can see at once that they have been cut off. The suttas illustrate this with a bold simile:

> Sandaka, it is like a man whose hands and feet have been cut off; whether he is walking or standing still or asleep or awake, constantly and perpetually are his hands and feet as though cut off; and moreover while he is reflecting on it, he knows: "My hands and feet have been cut off." Even so, Sandaka, whatever monk is a perfected one, the cankers destroyed, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained his own goal, the fetters of becoming utterly destroyed, freed by perfect profound knowledge, for him whether he is walking or standing still or asleep

> or awake, the cankers are as though destroyed; and moreover while he is reflecting on it, he knows: "My cankers are destroyed."
>
> —MN 76 (trans. I.B. Horner)

The arahat understands that the defilements he has eradicated brought bondage to the round of existence. He sees them as "defiling, conducive to renewed existence, afflictive, resulting in suffering, leading to future birth, ageing, and death." [37] Thence, by witnessing their utter eradication in himself, he gains certainty of his emancipation from the round: "Unshakeable is my emancipation. This is my last birth. There is now no renewal of existence." [38] Such knowledge remains an inalienable part of the arahat's spiritual inheritance. It is the basis for his assurance of immunity from future becoming. By reason of this knowledge he sounds the lion's roar with which he seals his triumph over the cycle of repeated births: "Destroyed is birth, lived is the holy life, the task has been completed, there is no returning to this state."

Notes

1. MN 28.
2. *Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassa uppāda idam uppajjati. Imasmiṃ asati idam na hoti, imassa nirodha idam nirujjhati.* MN 79, MN 115 etc.
3. SN XII.23; AN X.3–5.
4. AN X.2.
5. Sec. 388, See Ñāṇamoli, transl., *The Guide* (*Nettippakaraṇam*), (London: Pali Text Society, 1962), p. 97.
6. MN 22, SN XXII.86.
7. MN 26.
8. See SN XII.4–10.
9. See AN X.61,62
10. See Lama Anāgārika Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy,* (London, 1969), pp. 49–52.
11. AN X.61. *Ko cāhāro saddhāya? Saddhammassavananti*

'ssa vacanīyaṃ.

12. See MN 47, MN 95.

13. *Milindapañhā.* See Edward Conze, *The Way of Wisdom* (The **Wheel No. 65/66**), (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society), pp. 30–31.

14. *Ibid. Pakkhandanalakkhaṇa saddhā*.

15. *Ibid.*, p.31.

16. *Visuddhimagga*, I.98. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans. *The Path of Purification,* 3rd ed. (Kandy 1975. Buddhist Publication Society) p.36.

17. AN X.1

18. Vism. IV.94–98, Ñāṇamoli, pp. 149–150.

19. Vism. XIV.144, Ñāṇamoli, p. 525. The "five aggregates" (*pañcakkhandhā*) are the basic categories into which Buddhism analyses the sentient organism. The aggregate of material form covers the physical body; the aggregates of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness cover the mind. Of these four, the first three are considered the adjuncts or concomitants of consciousness, the primary factor of mental life.

20. DN 2.

21. Vism. IV.86, Ñāṇamoli, p. 147.

22. SN XXII.5.
23. Vism. XXI.49–50, Ñāṇamoli, p. 761.
24. Vism. XXI.46. Ñāṇamoli, p. 760.
25. See Vism. XX1.66–73, Ñāṇamoli, pp. 766–769.
26. AN III.25.
27. See Vism. XXII.92, Ñāṇamoli, p. 808.
28. MN 6, MN 12, MN 40, etc.
29. AN VI.55.
30. AN III.55.
31. *Sa-upādisesa nibbānadhātu.* See *Itivuttaka* 38.
32. See MN 121.
33. MN 140.
34. *Anupādisesa nibbānadhātu.* See *Itivuttaka* 38.
35. Ibid.
36. MN 26.
37. MN 36.
38. MN 26

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